A PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS OF RATIONALITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *IKIGAI**

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1. A Sociological Argument on Rationality

Weber's ideas concerning the analysis of societal rationalization - the dualistic conceptualization of rationality and the concept of Occidental Rationalism - were succeeded by J. Habermas, among others, who proposes his own idea of 'communicative rationality' in critically reviewing the Weberian conceptualization of rationality. He creates his own dualism to approach to sociological problem of rationality, the dualism of system and lifeworld, by devising a new type of rationality, communicative rationality.[1] Habermas's analytical scheme goes, however, beyond the Weberian optimistic notion of rationality in that Habermas dares to focus his concern on the paradoxical, and thus negative, effect of the modern institutionalization of the two social subsystems while Weber was concerned with their affinity. Habermas's idea is condensed in his concept of the 'colonization of the lifeworld.' He also approaches rationalization through the theorization of social action vis à vis the interactive exchange of meanings.

Habermas uses the 'mediatization of the lifeworld' in his explanatory scheme for the colonization of lifeworld, and it is interesting to note that this concept of mediatization occupies a theoretical place just opposite to that of disenchantment in Weberian theory: mediatization stresses an excessive, and thus irrational, superiority of the cognitive-instrumental type of rationality while disenchantment enhances reasonableness. This difference in analytical perspectives is attributable to difference in the historical milieu producing them. Communicative rationality is based on historical considerations of

(1)   This is an emulation of Weber's *'Interessenlage'* and *'Idee.'*

rationality, and a critical, and also negative, view of the developmental, and evolutionary, schematization of rationality.[2] The basic idea of Habermas's theory of communicative action is: Whereas persons acting alone are rational to the extent that they efficiently satisfy their private needs, social agents, who are accountable to others, are rational only to the extent that they resolve potential conflicts through argumentation.[3]

Habermas dares to expand the discussion of rationality beyond rationality as an instrumental adaptation by reaffirming 'the phenomenological insight that the environment to which we adapt is already a linguistically articulated world of shared - and to that extent, public and objective - experience.'[4] For an agent to be accepted as acting rationally in an interactive situation rationality in *The Theory of Community Action* demands that he or she 'sincerely express the authentic feelings and desires of the agent and be oriented toward the shared values of the given community.'[5] It cannot be denied that Habermas made theoretical progress in criticizing the Weberian scheme of rationality and also in locating rationality in the interactive perspective of the sociological analysis of action. I, however, want to claim in this paper that by introducing this analytical scheme he makes it even more essential to advocate further discussion of rationality in a comparative cultural perspective.

2. Individual Rational Choice and Societal Rationalities

J. Coleman critically discusses in a logical-positivistic view the formal structure of the Weberian scheme for explaining institutional reform from the viewpoint, not of autonomous change, but of the individual's desire for reformation. Coleman claims that Weber's explanatory scheme lacks a logical link, i.e., a micro-macro link, to explain how what took place in individual's inner world - a coupling of belief values (elective affinity) - eventually generated a social (or societal) reform of modern capitalism in Protestant societies.[6] It is argued in Weber's theory of elective affinity that Protestant ethics, nurtured in the deistic religious code of Protestantism, created an ideological seed bed

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（2） The critical view of rationalityis shared by the Frankfurt School.
（3） Habermas (1984), P.20
（4） Ibid., P.20.
（5） Ibid., P.20.
（6） Coleman (1990), Pp.6-10.

transforming individual hedonistic motivation into the modern spirit of capitalism. Thus two different ideologies of rationality contributed to making the modern type of human motivation constituting socio-economic institutions rationally. If we admit - we seem to find no reason to reject this - that the belief in Protestant religious doctrine coupled hedonism to a sense of rationality, one rationalized through work to pursuing secular happiness in the name of capitalist sprit, Weber should, Coleman claims, have shown a logical link to explain how the coupled ideologies of individual minds generated the institutional realization of the spirit of capitalism.

This problem is a micro-macro linkage problem in logic, and is also a theoretical problem in the discussion of retionality linking subjective rationality in individual choice and societal rationality at the level of institutions. A central problem in sociological theory concerns how the outcome of an individual's transaction is accompanied by a validity claim, with the claim being eligible through the values dominant in a society to control and integrate people's consciousness. It is thus the sociological problem of finding socio-culturally accepted conditions of rationality that integrate individual evaluative orientations generating eventual institutional reform. According to the voluntaristic view, the socio-cultural logic of this linkage should be found in people's inner worlds, not in institutional structures themselves. We could say that Habermas's theorization of rationality is located within Weberian voluntarism, and thus a similar critical claim could be made concerning it.

Mouzelis (1991) presents four criticisms of Habermas's scheme, and its first point concerns Habermas's explanation of the integration of system: 'the basic difficulty with Habermas' analysis is his linking up the externalist, functionalist perspective (system integration) with the steering media of action coordination located within the adaptation and goal-achievement sub-systems; and the internalist, participants' perspective with mechanisms of co-ordination based on normatively and/or communicatively achieved consensus. This linkage creates a great many complications, which undermine large chunks of Habermas' theory of communicative action.'[7] Habermas acknowledges an overwhelming power for the steering media to control subsystems: money in the economic system and power in the political system, but the problematic of this idea concerns how the media penetrate boundaries between the system and the lifeworld to

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（7） Mouzelis (1991), P.176.

entail a negative effect on communicative rationality.

The most important topic here is, however, that people are well aware of the difficulty of reliance on the functionality of the media since they bring this ability into full play only under completely structured situations without ambiguity and uncertainty. The nature of the situations where people are destined to take action is, however, often or typically characterized with uncertainty. This uncertainty cannot be avoided as the system is not institutionally structured in a way to allow complete dependence on the functions of media. How does an individual's action in an uncertain situation - in other words, a situation where a strong steering media is at work as just one of several value standards - produce as its aggregated result a society as a whole? Here is one example presenting the dilemma of rationality: the drastic decline of overall fertility in postwar Japan.

The figure in next page shows the longitudinal decrease in total fertility in Japan from 1925 to 2002. This transition is a remarkably constant with only a few temporary exceptions.[8]

Not a few researchers have tried to explain the reasons for the decline by employing demographic and socio-economic factors. One states:

'In the Japanese case, therefore, an increase in the unmarried ratio and an increasing tendency to put off marriage, accompanied by a delay in having the first child are directly attributable to the rise of age for having the first child. In a society like Japan where the number of extramarital children is small, the decline of fertility rate can adequately be explained by the demographic analysis of it into declining marriage ratio and the number of children born in marriage. An analysis based on this perspective says that almost all of the decline in fertility during 1975-90 can be attributable to the decrease in married youth in their twenties - in other words, the increasing ration of the single youth in that age conort.[9]

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(8) The first exceptional case is an influence of the second world war, and the second disturbance in 1966 is an abrupt fall due to a superstition shared by Japanese. Japanese still have a traditional custom to put symbolical meaning on each year by means of old Chinese zodiac. The year of 1968 was assumed according to this superstition to be the year in which a female baby born there is believed to make an unhappy life.

(9) Atô (1996), P.23. The translation is by Wada.

Fig. Long-Term Change of the Total Fertility Rate

(%)
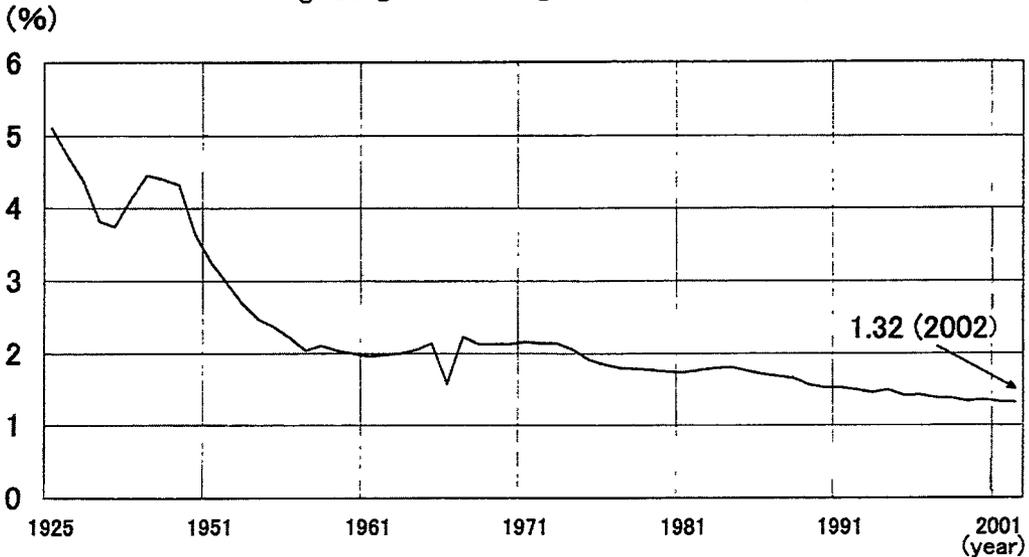
Source: Date and Shimizudani (2004), Fig. 1 "Gôkei-Tokushu-Shusshôritsu no Chôkiteki Suii" in P. 43. (The translation is made by Wada.)

It is very suggestive that while similar phenomenon is observable in almost every advanced society, the decline in Japan is almost entirely attributable to a tendency observable among young people to defer marriage or to select non-marriage. Adhering to cultural tradition, people do not wish to have children outside of marriage. Thus the negative attitude toward marriage results in limiting the chances for Japanese to have children. Why, then, are people reluctant to marry in current Japan?

The halfhearted attitude toward marriage could, I inspect, be an outcome of people's rational choice, an ideological change definable as an 'expressivist turn.' Self-fulfillment and self-assertiveness were devalued in traditional Japan and Japanese expressivism first became popularized in postwar Japan under the influences of Euro-American ideologies.[10] Such foreign ideology was validated in economic success, and thus the Japanese became positive regarding self-fulfillment.

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(10) The institutional reform carried out by the occupational forces emancipated individual Japanese form the ultra-nationalism in which the Japanese was forced to sacrifice private life to realize the public good. As shown in Taylor (1989), this sort of the utilitarian individualism was nurtured in a qualitative transformation of social outlook generated by a combination of the Kantean idealism and naturalism; the expressionist turn in Taylor's terminology.

The total fertility rate is a statistically aggregated, averaged outcome of individual behavior, and is thus an artificial fiction in that there cannot be found any real social phenomenon corresponding to it. It remains, however, an irrational phenomenon if we see in it an evaluative judgment on the existence and/or functioning of Japanese society as a whole.[11] This means that we cannot find any 'invisible hand' shaping preestablished harmony between individual and societal preference. If so, how should we theorize this sort of situation?

3. Paradigmatic Frame of Action and The Paradigm of *Ikigai*

A key, but problematic, concept in social choice is the notion of self-fulfillment. Gewerth, who recognizes its essential nature as the maximization of the valued, defines it in the following way:

> According to this conception, self-fulfillment consists in carrying to fruition *one's deepest desires or one's worthiest capacities*. It is bringing of oneself to flourishing completion, an unfolding of what is strongest or best in oneself, so that *it represents the successful culmination of one's aspirations or potentialities. In this way self-fulfillment betoken as life well lived, a life that is deeply satisfying, fruitful, and worthwhile.* It is diametrically opposed not only to such other reflexive relations as self-defeat, self-frustration, self-alienation, and self-destruction, but also to invasions whereby such injuries are inflicted by forces external to the self. The struggle for self-fulfillment has figured centrally in our literary heritage as well as in much of the actual history of human beings.[12]

Expressive individualism, which is based on a naturalist view of the individual person with his own desires and capacities to gratify them, claims that self-fulfillment is more than mere individual needs-gratification. It does this by representing a life well lived as the good life, one that is satisfying, fruitful, and accordingly worthwhile. Other things being equal, there should be no reason to deny adequacy of the expressivist notion, but a problem

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(11) Policy makers, very much irritated by this trend, recognize the urgent political need to stop this decline.

(12) Gewirth (1998), P.3. Italics are added by Wada.

from the sociological view might be that it does not pay full attention to the social consequence of an individual's self-fulfilling behavior. Individual self-fulfillment, rational in the cognitive-instrumental sense of rationality, can result in a 'social-unfulfillment' as shown in the decline of the total fertility rate in the postwar Japan.

A voluntaristic perspective on social action[13] sees an outcome of an action as a combined result of the actor's voluntaristic choice conditioned by cooperative and/or obstructing responses under institutional constraints and/or promotions. Institutional constraints and promotion are assumed to be external and independent of an actor's inner world, and it is claimed that subject/object dualism cannot be avoided, resulting eventually in a division into 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' schools. A. Giddens tries to avoid this dualism by proposing 'structuration' as a theoretical trial to avoid the unproductive division of a dualistic conception of social action[14]. One of the key variables in structuration theory focuses on the 'structure' of society. This is recognized as having a dual aspect including 'the medium for and the outcome of conduct,' and 'it recursively organises - a medium because it is through its use that social conduct is produced, and an outcome because it is through the production of this conduct that rules and resources are reproduced in time and space.'[15]

Giddens's frame of social action seems to be directly applicable to an analysis of the rationality of self-fulfillment. The problem is, however, how do we reveal a logic to explain the co-realization of individual self-fulfillment and societal rationality? As claimed by Mouzelis, Giddens's theory lacks this explanatory logic in that it is the individual's cognitive intent that determines whether institutional transformation occurs or the status quo is kept.[16] In this respect, the individual recognizes the institutional structure as the object of cognition of reform, and thus of will. This notion leads us to a voluntaristic claim of social reform in that social institutional structure changes only if people create the will to reform it. This statement might sound too subjective, but a similar opinion can be found in regard to the discussion of economic efficiency. Leibenstein warns of the inadequacy of the maximization formula as an explanation of

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(13) See Parsons (1968) concerning voluntarism.
(14) Giddens (1984).
(15) Ibid., P.26.
(16) Mouzelis (1991), P.26.

economic rationality (efficiency), and he dares to introduce the concept of X-(in)efficiency as a substitute to make a more suitable explanatory scheme for the organization of rational behavior.[17] We can understand his claim as introducing a subjective aspect to individual efficiency, say 'motivational efficiency', as a variable to explain the inefficient behavior of organizations: organizational efficiency can be attained only when its members are motivated efficiently and have the will to contribute to its realization.

Giddens seems to try to strengthen a weak point in Habermas's theory of communicative action concerning the logic explaining the colonization of the lifeworld as the mal-integration of a subsystem. His theoretical strategy for attaining this aim is to re-conceptualize the functional nature of social structure mediating the ideological aspect of social interaction. Structure as a medium for interaction should, however, not to be regarded as an instrument such as price in an economic system or power in a political system, but rather is closely intermingled with a certain ideological backing. It thus should be acknowledged that structure is not like price at work in the institution of a market, but is the institution itself, and thus it should be recognized as a cognitive object for transforming it. Such a paradoxical phenomenon as the steady decline of the total fertility rate accompanying individual self-fulfillment needs to be discussed in a different theoretical frame. A woman and/or a couple in contemporary Japan tend to regard self-fulfillment as having an undeniable positive value. The essential point is that complete fulfillment of self-fulfillment is given primacy, and it takes a long time to realize such motivation in one's life[18]. Completion of the fulfillment is in this sense always a quite uncertain life goal.

Here is a suggestive analysis of one's decision making within uncertainty: 'Faced with uncertainty, individuals will seek approval and avoid disapproval.'[19] An individual makes a decision according to her own paradigm, or a subtype of the lifeworld in Habermas's terminology, and she tends to employ a paradigm that can gain social approval. An

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(17) For example, see Leibenstein (1976).

(18) 'Thus it is by habituation that the various states of character are developed, in that there must be a certain kind of training of the emotions, which proceeds not only or mainly by intellectual instruction but rather by discipline, force of example, legislation, and other ways that depend upon human desires and choices.' (Gewirth, 1998, P.11)

(19) Young (1993), P.63.

action orientation in seeking approval is another, and more general, type of action paradigm. A major aspect of self-fulfillment as self-realization is attainable by obtaining social approval. The new paradigm of action must be the one that has a lot to do with the individual's serious concerns in life; in other word, it should have a function of coupling individual and social (and/or societal) rationalities because individual rationality seeks to make one's life worth living and the life worth living is the meaningful life in society.

> I spoke in the previous paragraph about our 'moral and spiritual' intuitions. In fact, I want to consider a gamut of views a bit broader than what is normally described as the 'moral'. In addition to our notions and reactions on such issues as justice and the respect of other people's life, well being, and dignity, I want also to look at our sense of what underlies our own dignity, or questions about what makes our life meaningful or fulfilling. These might be classed as moral questions on some broad definition, but some are too concerned with the self-regarding, or too much a matter of our ideals, to be classed as moral issues in most people's lexicon. *They concern, rather, what makes life worth living.*[20]

The paradigm shown in the above quote from Taylor (1989) could be taken as another, perhaps more general, paradigm in the framing of action, and is more applicable to situations based on subject/object dualism.

And finally, it might be claimed that an individual paradigm of action is what Japanese nurtured in the historical change of values under the influences of the expressivist turn. This value change seems to appear in the change of meaning captured in the Japanese word *ikigai*, or 'what makes life worth living': a change in the objective meaning of ikigai from the public good to personal matters.[21] This suggests to us that this change in action paradigm is a strategy for adjusing instrumentally the expressionist turn, and that as an aggregated consequence of this a rational paradigm of self-fulfillment resulted in an irrational outcome. I want to claim here that the ideological

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(20) Taylor (1989), P.4. The italics are added by Wada.

(21) See Wada (2002) concerning the theoretical frame of ikigai.

transformation the Japanese experienced in the postwar period took place in Japanese historical and cultural contexts, meaning that ideological rationality cannot be discussed without taking into consideration cultural factors, and thus that functional aspects of rationality cannot either if we agree with Sahlins' opinion[22].

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(22) 'One evident matter - for bourgeois society as much as the so-called primitive - is that material aspects are not usefully separated from the social, as if the first were referable to the satisfaction of needs by the exploitation of nature, the second to problems of the relations between men. Having made such a fateful differentiation of cultural components - having dissociated the cultural order into subsystems of different purpose - we are forced to live forever with the intellectual consequences. That is, each "subsystem" is subjected initially to a different kind of analysis, in the terms of material and social properties, respectively, and then referred to a different teleo-logic ⋯' (Sahlins, 1976, p.205)

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